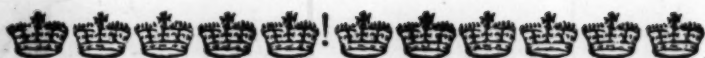




THE
D U T Y
OF
ALMS-GIVING.





Shortly will be Publish'd, by the same Author,

THE Case of a Religious Society, &c. And a Sermon, wherein Christian Love is recommended; with a Rebuke to the Sin of Envy.



The Duty of Alms-giving:

Recommended in a

S E R M O N

PREACH'D in the

Parish-Church of WHICKHAM,

IN THE

County of DURHAM, August 6, 1732.

By TAYLOR THIRKELD, M. A.



NEWCASTLE:

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and the Bookfellers in *Newcastle* and *Durham*.

MDCCXXXIX.





T O
GEORGE BOWES, *Esq;*

Member of Parliament for the
County of DURHAM.

S I R,



WAS no sooner determin'd to publish the following S E R M O N, than I thought of addressing it to You. None but a Person of the most generous and benevolent Temper can be the proper Patron of a Discourse, which recommends the *Duty of Alms-giving*; and since Example is allow'd to be more prevalent than Precept, to enforce the Duty in the most engaging, effectual Manner, I have set the Example before it.

As

iv DEDICATION.

As my Intention is not to observe the ordinary Method of Addresses of this Nature, I forbear to enlarge upon Your Character any farther than what relates to the Subject before us; I forbear to mention those extraordinary Qualities, that shine forth in all Your Life and Actions; I pass over in Silence Your generous Concern for Your Country; Your noble Thirst after every Thing that is great and praise-worthy; but I can't forbear telling all the World, how greatly I love and esteem You, and that I am,

S I R,

Your most Obliged,

WICKHAM,
Aug. 6, 1739.

Most Thankful,

Most Obedient Servant,

Taylor Thirkeld.



P R E F A C E.

I BEG Leave to inform the Reader, that this Discourse was not design'd to appear in Print, till I found that it, or at least the Preamble to it, as it was once deliver'd on Nov. 6, 1737, was complain'd of lately by some one, as containing Reflections upon two of the Church-Wardens; whereas the Author neither mention'd, hinted at, nor intended them; but the rich People in general, who ought to have discouraged any Misapplications of Legacies to the Poor, are pointed at, as appears from the Preamble itself. I but just touch'd upon the Affair, thinking that the following Sermon might persuade them not only to do Justice to the Poor, but to relieve them also according to their Abilities, and not suffer them to die for Want, as I thought some of them did, whom I visited, when too late.

The Misapplication complain'd of was the turning over a great Part of the Legacies for the Poor to the Assessment, which is a taking it from the Poor, and giving it to the Rich. That this Misapplication was approved of and recommended by some one, for many Years, I, as well as others, have since that Time been well informed.

The

The Preamble as deliver'd after the Text,
Nov. 6, 1737.

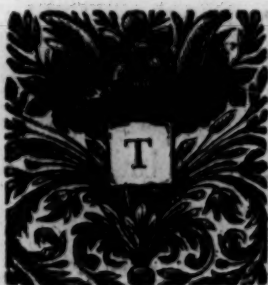
“ **WE** are all satisfied that the Necessities of the Poor of this Parish
“ are pressing and urging; yet we are so
“ far from giving them their Meat in due
“ Season, that we take it from them, and
“ have so little Bowels of Mercy and Compassion, as to suffer a Brother, for whom
“ *Christ* died, to die for want of the Necessaries of Life. We are so far from being
“ charitable, or liberal to the Poor, that we
“ with-hold what is already given, by an
“ unjust Application of it. The rich Men
“ now-a-days are so far from leaving Legacies to enable poor Families to get over the
“ Hardships of a Winter, that they take
“ them from them. We read almost in every
“ Page of the Gospel, *the Blessedness of Giving*; but we are no where enjoyn'd to receive, or take from the Poor: No, but we
“ are to see that the Poor and Needy have
“ Right. This is the Duty of every good
“ Christian: No good Man can see such a
“ Misapplication, which is no less than
“ robbing God and the Poor, who are his
“ Receivers, but must endeavour to put a
“ Stop to it, otherwise *we shall be Partakers of their evil Deeds, whereas we ought at least to reprove them.* Having thus briefly
“ touch'd upon the Guilt and Danger of
“ such a Misapplication, I proceed to exhort
“ you to the great Duty of *Alms-giving*, and
“ that from these Words, &c.

ACTS



ACTS XX. 35.

It is more blessed to give than to receive.



THESE Words have this peculiar Recommendation, that they are *the Words of the Lord Jesus*, and therefore ought to be had in Remembrance, and to be very highly esteem'd for his Sake. They are cited by *St. Paul*, and recorded by *St. Luke*, being the Conclusion of the Apostle's Farewel-speech to the Elders of *Ephesus*.

The great Duty he is here recommending, is that of Charity, of relieving the Poor and Needy; and this he does, first, from his own Example, *whose Hands ministred not only to his own Necessities, but to them also that were with him; and therefore he shew'd them all things, how that so labouring they ought to support the Weak.* As a yet farther Motive to this most excellent Virtue, which is the

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Bond of Perfectness, he instances our Lord Jesus, whose whole Life was spent in *doing Good*, who, *tho' he was rich, yet for our Sakes became poor*, and emptied himself; who gave all that he had, even himself for us, *leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps*; and, as a Means to do this, we ought to remember the Words, that he spake to his Followers, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, of which Proposition I shall,

First, Settle the Meaning.

Secondly, I shall make out the Truth of it.

Thirdly, I shall conclude with a brief Exhortation.

First, I am to state the Meaning of the Proposition.

Now, *Giving* in this Text, to which a greater Degree of Blessedness is annexed than to *Receiving*, cannot be meant what we give in a rash, precipitate Manner, either to support the Extravagancies and Luxury of some, or to encourage and maintain the supine Carelessness and Sloth in others: Neither do I think *Giving* preferable to *Receiving*, when what we give proceeds from some worldly View, from a Principle of Self-Interest, Vanity, or Ostentation. I dare venture to affirm

firm, if the Receiver makes a due Acknowledgement, and retains a grateful Sense of Favours received, *May, I may safely aver it, this Man is more blessed in his Deed, than he who giveth all he hath, and hath not Charity, i. e.* than he, who bestows his Alms not out of a Sense of his Duty to God, and Love to his Neighbour. *Giving* then must be understood that which we give upon Motives warranted by the Gospel, and approved of by Reason, what we give to feed the Hungry, to cloath the Naked, or to relieve our Neighbour in any other Adversity, expecting nothing in return, but the comfortable and cheering Hopes of being *recompenced at the Resurrection of the Just.*

Now *Giving*, in this pious and religious Sense, we shall (as I shall shew hereafter) find preferable to Receiving, whether we take Receiving for the Alms and kind Offices done to us by others, or for what we hoard up, or for what we expend upon ourselves in an expensive, luxurious, and therefore scandalous Way of Living: I say it is a more blessed, a more happy Condition, to be the Author of Goodness to others, than to be the Object of their Benevolence: And again I say unto you, when we are once provided with what is decent and convenient for Life, if we lay out the Surplus upon pious and charitable Uses, it will turn more

to our Account, we shall be more blessed, than if we hoarded it up, or, by a scandalous Neglect of our Reason, expended it in an extravagant, luxurious, or, what some falsely call, generous Way of Life.

The Truth of which I am to evince under my second Head.

1. It is more blessed to give than to receive, because the former carries more Pleasure and Satisfaction along with it than the latter: 'Tis true, an Alms seasonably reach'd out to the Poor and Needy, makes them forget their Poverty, lays their Cares a-sleep, and infuses Joy and Gladness into their Hearts; but the Alms is no sooner spent, than the Pleasure retires, Sorrow succeeds, and they feel their former Wants: Whereas the Pleasure of the Giver is fix'd and unchangeable, not only accompanies him in this World, but in that which is to come.

When we do Good to others, we do the greatest Good to ourselves; for *the merciful Man does Good to his own Soul*. I make no Difficulty to determine, and let every cheerful Giver here present judge of the Truth of my Assertion, that the Widow in the Gospel, who gave her Mite, which was all her Living, to the Poor, had, in Return, more solid Pleasure and Satisfaction, than if
she

she had laid up in a Coffer, or expended upon herself, the Riches of the *Indies*: The Pleasure then of *Giving* far exceeds that of *Receiving*; 'tis so great, that 'tis rather to be felt than express'd.

The Poor then give us that Pleasure, which the World cannot give, are truly the happy Occasion of making many rich, since a Man can lay out his Money to so much Satisfaction and Interest, no other Way. Hence a late ingenious Author makes this notable Reflection upon the Argument before us; " The Pleasure the charitable Man is
 " entertained with here, and the Reward
 " promised him afterwards, is so great, that
 " it may be objected, we perfectly misun-
 " derstand and miscall Things; for, pro-
 " perly speaking, those that are relieved are
 " the Benefactors; the greatest Obligation
 " comes from the Needy; 'tis they that are
 " the Occasion of a far greater Advantage
 " to their Neighbour, than what they re-
 " ceive from him; so that when the Gain
 " is computed on both Sides, the Receiver
 " looks more like the charitable Person:
 " From whence it will follow, that the
 " Poor ought rather to be importun'd than
 " deny'd; and that we should be more for-
 " ward to offer them our Assistance, than
 " they are to ask it." Which ingenious Remark has at least so much Truth in it,

as to be a forcible Motive, even for our own Sakes, *never to turn away our Face from a poor Man.*

2. The Condition of the Giver is more blessed, more happy, than that of the Receiver, because giving procures more Honour and Credit, secures the Favour and Esteem of the World; whereas receiving, scraping, and amassing up great Stores of Wealth, tho' by just Methods, but without any reasonable End propos'd, and only in order to keep, and as it were bury them, intrenches upon Truth, appears to be a Vice, and therefore meets at least with a secret, if not open, Contempt and Disesteem.

The Condition of the Giver is an honourable Trust, a most creditable Station; your good Men, who have been merciful and liberal, who have made a right Use of their Riches, who have been faithful Stewards in giving the Poor their Meat in due Season, have always been Men famous in their Generation, whose Names have been embalm'd in the Sheets of some *Homer* or *Herodotus* for Ages to come: Those who have *dispers'd abroad, and given to the Poor*, like the River Nile, that overflows its Banks, to throw Plenty into the Country, have been, as it were, Gods to their Brethren, and therefore the Darlings of Mankind. Those, who
are

are a publick Blessing to the World, who have been *Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lamé, a Father to the Fatherless, and a Husband to the Widow*, are ever lovely and pleasant in their Lives, amiable and beautiful in their Characters, in the Language of the Psalmist, *their Horn is exalted with Honour, and they themselves had in everlasting Remembrance*. But as for the rich, uncharitable Man, 'tis not so with him. He, whose continual Study it is to heap up unprofitable Riches, for no Use, no reasonable End, is a Curse to his Relations, a Jest to his Neighbours, a Reproach to Nature: He meets with Hatred instead of Good-will, and when he dies, *his Memorial perishes with him*. Yet if his Name survive his Funeral, 'tis us'd as a By-word to denote a Miser, 'tis treated with Contempt and Reproach.

3. To give, *i. e.* to be beneficial to others, is more blessed than to receive; because it makes more for our Advantage both in the Life, that now is, and in that which is to come. Now, as to our temporal Concerns, that we should be enriched by Giving, is a Doctrine that will be exploded by your Men of this World, be look'd upon as a notorious Falsity, an egregious Absurdity: Whereas 'twill appear to be a just Conclusion, whether we consult the Oracles of God, or our own Experience. He, who wisely bestows

stows his Riches in the Service of his Country, for the Benefit of his Friends, or the Relief of the Poor, secures to himself a *goodly Heritage*, the Love and Esteem of every good Man, the Favour and Blessing of God. By Giving then a Man secures to himself a most lasting, if not the greatest Estate; a most lasting one, because in the Time of Commotion and Disturbance he shall be protected from Harm, and secured from Violence, and in the Time of *Dearth* he shall *have enough*; every one will be ready to aid and assist him, for *so good a Man some would even dare to die*. And that the charitable Man takes the most likely Way of enlarging his Estate, may be fairly concluded from a Cloud of Texts in the sacred Writings: *There is that scattereth, and yet encreaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to Poverty: The liberal Soul is made fat, and he that watereth, is watered also himself*, are the Words of Solomon; and hear greater than Solomon, what he says, *Give, and it shall be given unto you, good Measure, press'd down, and shaken together, and running over, shall Men give unto your Bosom; for the same Measure ye mete withall, it shall be measured to you again*. Great is the Interest, large is the Return of our Charity, it may be an *hundred fold even* in this Life; at least, it secures to us a lasting Estate, such an Estate, as yields a true Pleasure,

sure, a solid and substantial Satisfaction: For thus it is written, *He that giveth to the Poor shall not lack. Trust in the Lord and do Good, so shall thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* The righteous and merciful Man has the utmost Assurance of being happy, under the special Guidance and Protection of Providence: For, *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy: And he that giveth to the Poor, happy is he: And again, Blessed is he that considereth the Poor, the Lord will deliver him in the Time of Trouble: The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and will not deliver him into the Will of his Enemies: The Lord will strengthen him upon the Bed of Languishing, thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickness.* Whence it appears that the temporal Advantages of Giving are mighty and unspeakable, that * 'tis our Interest to go and sell all that we have, and give it to the Poor. To this the covetous Man, whom God abhorreth, will quickly object, that a Man is not sure that Pro-
C vidence

* This may seem (says a considerable Author) a hard Law of Religion; but a reasonable Man can't but see that there is no other natural or reasonable Use of our Riches, no other Way of making ourselves happier by them; that it is as strictly right to give to the Needy that which we don't want ourselves, as 'tis right to use so much as our own Wants require; and that he must rejoice in that Religion which teaches him to be happier in that which he gives away, than in that which he keeps for himself, which teaches him to make the Food and Raiment he can spare to be greater Blessings to him, than that which feeds and cloathes his own Body.

vidence will repay him his Alms in this Life, for in Fact 'tis not always so. To which I reply, that if our Money was always return'd us in Specie (as 'tis sometimes, with Interest) the Niggard would then be as ready to distribute as the merciful and good Man; and if the Case were so, there would be no such thing as Charity; for the charitable Man hopes for nothing again in this World, but has the comfortable Hopes of being recompenced at the Resurrection of the Just. Again, tho' perhaps what we give to relieve the Poor be not restored us the same that we gave it, yet a Man never fails to meet with a large Return of true Pleasure and Satisfaction from his own Breast, more than an Equivalent for what he lays out; so that, as is aforesaid, giving Tends to our Profit in this Life, provided it (as it always does) recompence the Giver with a true and lasting Pleasure. I never met with any one yet, that was so much in Love with his Money, as not to own this apparent Truth, That Riches are no farther serviceable or desireable, than as they tend to promote our Happiness; *i. e.* in other Words, our Pleasure and Satisfaction; and it is evident, our Conscience bearing Witness to the Truth, that we receive the greatest Satisfaction from doing Good; and therefore we should employ what is beyond the Conveniences of Life upon charitable Uses; for this is acting agreeable

greeable to Reason, Truth, and our own Happiness, even in this mortal Life. Hence it is that Acts of Charity are peculiar stiled, *Humanity*, as being so agreeable to human Nature, and consequently conducive to our Happiness. Hence it is that some, who have scarce any thing to spare, who have nothing but their Labour to sustain them, and Providence to depend on, are so ready to give, so glad to distribute, that they give, like the Churches of *Macedonia*, not only to their Power, but beyond it; or like the Widow in the Gospel, cast, as it were, their whole Living into the Treasury of the Poor.

Thus have I laid before the several Advantages of *Giving*, even in this World, which are preferable to the greatest Riches: Whereas the Condition of the Receiver is attended with no real Pleasure, but with a great deal of Trouble and Vexation of Spirit. He who is all upon the *Receiving*, and laying up Riches in Store, seems just so much enrich'd with his Treasure as an Ass is with its Burthen. The Miser cannot enlarge his Treasure, but must at the same Time encrease his Trouble: He must be always uneasy lest *the Moth should corrupt it, or Thieves break thro', and steal it*, or lest his Riches should make themselves Wings and fly away. This he has Reason to fear, because he has no sincere Friend, seeing he does no Good with his

Riches, and because he is so terribly threatened from the Bible, *The Man that remembereth not to shew Mercy, the Extortioner shall consume all that he hath, and the Stranger shall spoil his Labour: There shall be no Man to pity him, nor to have Compassion on his fatherless Children.* So that the unmerciful Man, that shrinks up his Humanity, and is contracted within himself, has little Assurance of his Estates being continued to him, much less to his Posterity; and therefore upon this Account can have no real Pleasure in the Enjoyment of it.

Whereas the liberal Soul hath not only the Promise of this Life, but also of that which is to come. Thus speaketh he who hath the Words of eternal Life, *When thou makest a Feast, call the Poor, the Maim'd, the Lame, and the Blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompence thee; for thou shalt be recompenc'd at the Resurrection of the Just.* And again, *Make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations, i. e. as the Greek may and ought to be rendered, Make to yourselves Friends (such Provision) of * false Riches (being transitory and uncertain) that when ye die, ye may be received into everlasting Habitations.* And thus says the

* Luke xvi. V. 11. *ἀδίκῳ is oppos'd to εὐανδρίῳ.

the Apostle to Timothy, Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches; but in the living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy; that they do Good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.

'Tis then, in a most eminent Degree, more blessed to give than to receive, because giving will procure to us a distinguish'd Reward in the Life to come, in Comparison of which, the gaudy Furniture of this Life, nay the whole World is nothing; for *what is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Yet Receiving is not only an Impediment to our Happiness, but is the Reason of our being cast into Hell, as appears from the Parable of Dives, who received his good Things in this Life: For *he that layeth up Treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God, he shall hardly, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Who-so has this World's Goods, and sells not what he has to give Alms, these Goods are his Treasure, consequently his Affections are set upon them; for *where a Man's Treasure is, there will his Heart be also.* And if a Man's Heart be so set upon his Riches, he will neglect the Offices of Kindness to his Neighbour,

bour, neither will God be in all his Thoughts. *A Man cannot serve two Masters, he will either hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* Therefore our Saviour denounces a Woe against them that are rich; therefore he says, 'tis next to an Impossibility, *'tis easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Thus, I think, I have sufficiently convinc'd you of the Truth of the Proposition, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* What farther Motive then need I urge to persuade you to this grand Duty of Alms-giving? Shall I urge the Pleasure and Satisfaction that attends giving? or shall I say, that 'tis always accompanied with Honour and Credit? or, lastly, shall I add, that it tends to your Profit and Advantage both here and hereafter? All this you're fully convinc'd of. I think it needless to bid you follow the inward Motions of your own Breast, that, with a silent, yet pathetic Language, pleads the Cause of the Poor and Nedy. The Rule of Reason is, *Do as ye would be done by.* And the Command of God is, *To do Good, and to distribute, forget not.* So that he, who, out of his Abundance, relieves not the Distress'd, must offer Violence

to his natural Inclinations, run counter to Reason, and trample under Foot the Word of God.

Would you resemble the divine Nature in its most amiable, endearing Perfection? ye must *be ready to do Good, willing to communicate.* Goodness is not impoverish'd, but enrich'd by giving; for Goodness is nothing else but giving and communicating to others: *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father, who is in Heaven, is merciful.*

Would you follow the Example of Christ? follow after Charity; for his whole Life was spent in doing Good, leaving us an Example, that ye should follow his Steps.

Lastly, would you save your immortal Souls? be not like the young Man in the Gospel, nor the merciless *Dives* in the Parable, who *received* his good Things in this Life; but, above all, remember, that your Charity, because it shines above the rest of Virtues, will be the main, tho' not the sole, Subject of that grand Enquiry at the last Day; as is evident from the Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus*, and from the Account our Saviour gives of the Proceedings in that Day, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World; for I was an*
hungered,

hungred, and ye gave me Meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink ; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye cloathed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in Prison, and ye came unto me. Where our Saviour reputes the Performance of these Duties to *the least of his Brethren, as a doing them to himself.* That we may therefore be in the Number of those, to whom our Saviour shall pronounce the, *Come, ye blessed,* let us embrace every Opportunity of doing Good unto all Men ; and to this End, let us carefully remember the Words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

F I N I S.

